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RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 3267
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5714
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000839

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR J. HARMON AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: UNEASY CALM BLANKETS ZIMBABWE,S RURAL AREAS

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Classified By: CDA Donald K. Petterson for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) A series of Embassy visits across five Zimbabwean provinces between mid-September and mid-October 2009 confirmed that levels of political violence are currently quite low, with the exception of invasions of several contested white-owned commercial farms. Nevertheless, the potential for renewed violence remains high as core ZANU-PF structures)- youth militia, war veterans, and the military -- that directed last year's election-related violence are still active in rural communities, and in some instances appear to be stepping-up recruiting and intimidation efforts.
END SUMMARY.

Uneasy Calm in Zimbabwe's Rural Areas

12. (SBU) From mid-September to mid-October, emboffs visited Mashonaland East, Masvingo, Manicaland, Midlands, and Matabeleland North provinces and had discussions with local MPs, civil society leaders, school officials, and individuals implementing Embassy-sponsored Self Help Projects. With the exception of Matabeleland North, all these provinces suffered from extensive political violence and intimidation during last year's elections.

13. (SBU) Our contacts in Shurugwi (Midlands province); Bikita, Buhera, Gutu (Masvingo province); Chinhoyi (Mashonaland East province); Nyanyadzi (Manicaland province); and Binga, Hwange, and Victoria Falls (Matabeleland North province) consistently told us that there were no current ZANU-PF orchestrated campaigns of political violence. While tensions remain and ZANU-PF supporters periodically

intimidate MDC supporters, widespread beatings, abductions, and deaths have abated.

¶4. (C) However, our visits revealed some notable violent exceptions -- a handful of fiercely-contested farm invasions. These appear to be individually-motivated instances, as distinguished from the ZANU-PF-organized violence in 2008. One example is Friedawil farm near Chinhoyi where MDC-T MP Stewart Garadhi informed us that South African farmer Louis Fick was forced off his farm in mid-September by supporters of the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Edward Mashiringwani. Another example, contained in a report by Justice for Agriculture (JAG), an organization that defends the legal rights of commercial farmers, is that of the Charles Lock farm in Mashonaland East. Brigadier General Justin Mujaji employed approximately 18 army soldiers in taking over the farm. Soldiers beat numerous farm employees, shot at least one, raped one woman, and attempted to rape at least two others during their three-week stay on the Lock farm. (NOTE: Lock's farm is co-owned by a German citizen and should be protected by a signed Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement between Germany and Zimbabwe END NOTE). QZimbabwe END NOTE).

¶5. (SBU) Across Zimbabwe, citizens have attempted to regain property)- often chickens, cows, and farm implements)- from the ZANU-PF community members who stole them in 2008. In several instances, these attempts have led to violence against the claimants. In others, the claimants have been thrown in jail on charges of extortion for attempting to regain stolen property.

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ZANU-PF Structures Still in Place

¶6. (C) Despite the current absence of broad-based violence, numerous contacts cited concerns about the continued existence of ZANU-PF structures, and in some cases even increased ZANU-PF presence and activity. Jestina Mukoko, the director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, which monitors violence, confirmed to poloff that reports of violence had declined, but warned that ZANU-PF youth were mobilizing to support the Mugabe-favored Kariba Draft constitution by threatening communities with violence if they failed to support it. In an October 19 meeting with emboffs, leaders of seven prominent NGOs concurred that people in some rural areas faced intimidation over the Kariba Draft. They told us ZANU-PF could manipulate votes in a constitutional referendum or election through intimidation alone. Wounds from last year's violence remained fresh and the mere presence of ZANU-PF youth and war veterans in rural communities continued to be a significant deterrent to open affiliation with the MDC.

¶7. (C) Counseling Services Unit (CSU), a local NGO that provides treatment and counseling to victims of violence, informed us of increases in ZANU-PF youth activity in Mashonaland East province. In the Mudzi constituencies, ZANU-PF officials have been rounding up young men and taking them away for "training." The nature of the training is unknown, but parents are terrified as the "trainers" were involved in last year's violence. Newton Kachepa, Mudzi North's ZANU-PF MP, has allegedly been directing these efforts, according to CSU.

¶8. (SBU) Contacts in the Murehwa district of Mashonaland East told us villagers were promised seed and fertilizer in exchange for attending a meeting, but were then forced to chant ZANU-PF slogans and denigrate MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai. They were also told to support the Kariba Draft. At the meeting's conclusion, the villagers were threatened with beheading if they failed to back the Kariba Draft.

¶9. (C) MDC-T MP Stewart Garadhi told us that ZANU-PF youth continued to infiltrate schools and pressure teachers in Mashonaland West province. He said that in a nearby district youths forced a headmaster to allow them the use of a classroom for "national services." These services centered on training and indoctrinating new members and intimidating MDC supporters. Garadhi and Mukoko also confirmed that bases used by war veterans, military and youth to torture MDC supporters during the 2008 election period remained in existence in some areas.

¶10. (SBU) Prime Minister Tsvangirai's statement to the press on October 16 announcing the MDC's disengagement from ZANU-PF made clear that the MDC takes these reports seriously; he cited "extensive militarization of the countryside through massive deployment of the military and setting up bases of Qmassive deployment of the military and setting up bases of violence." Tsvangirai also mentioned that there are 16,000 ZANU-PF youth on government payrolls.

COMMENT

¶11. (SBU) Despite the relative calm thus far in 2009, most rural people remain nervous about the potential for renewed violence in Zimbabwe. This stems in large part from the complete lack of effort by the police and courts to investigate and hold accountable last year's perpetrators. Consequently, ZANU-PF youth, war veterans, and soldiers known to be responsible for violence still circulate in rural

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communities, pushing the ZANU-PF agenda on issues such as the Kariba Draft and intimidating known MDC supporters. END
COMMENT.

PETTERSON